# Saint Paul Planning Commission City Hall Conference Center 15 Kellogg Boulevard West

# Minutes September 30, 2011

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 30, 2011 at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

Commissioners

Mmes. Merrigan, Perrus, Porter, Reveal, Thao, Wang, Wencl, Young; and

**Present:** 

Messrs. Connolly, Fernandez, Gelgelu, Kramer, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, Spaulding,

Ward, and Wickiser.

Commissioners

Ms. \*Halverson and Messrs. \*Commers, and \*Schertler

Absent:

\*Excused

**Also Present:** 

Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works, Lucy Thompson, Patricia James, Merritt Clapp-Smith, Kate Reilly, Anton Jerve, Ryan Kelley, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

# I. Approval of minutes September 16, 2011.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of September 16, 2011. Commissioner Thao seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

# II. Chair's Announcements

Commissioner Wencl, who is the Commission's first vice chair, chaired the meeting. Commissioner Wencl read a resolution honoring Commissioner Young for her service on the Planning Commission.

<u>MOTION:</u> Commissioner Thao moved approval of the resolution honoring Commissioner Young. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

## III. Planning Director's Announcements

Donna Drummond announced that the Shepard Davern Residential Redevelopment Overlay District Amendment was given final approval by the City Council on Wednesday. Also, the state American Planning Association conference is currently being held in St. Cloud, which started on Wednesday and continues through today. Ms. Drummond attended Wednesday and Thursday. She said there were a number of staff who submitted proposals for sessions and did presentations, including sessions on electric vehicle charging stations, Central Corridor Brownfield project, Central Corridor parking program, and fiscal impact modeling.

## IV. Zoning Committee

SITE PLAN REVIEW – List of current applications. (Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)

Four items came before the staff Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, September 27, 2011:

- Summit Hill Assisted Living conversion of hotel to 118 unit assisted living, 1870 Old Hudson Road.
- Central Corridor Parking Lot improvements to existing lot, 676 University Avenue W.
- Barole Trucking Bldg new office warehouse building, 2286 Capp Road.
- Subway Parking Lot grading and improvements, 2119 University Avenue.

Three items to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, October 4, 2011:

- Cherry's Minnehaha Tavern Parking Lot new parking area, 745 White Bear Avenue.
- Storchak Drycleaner front and back building additions, 857 7<sup>th</sup> Street East.
- Community Dental Parking Lot 53 total parking spaces, 1236 Arcade Street.

#### **NO BUSINESS**

Commissioner Kramer announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, October 6, 2011.

#### V. Comprehensive Planning Committee

Commissioner Merrigan said the committee met on Tuesday and reviewed a first draft of the Industrial Zoning Study. There was discussion about the relationship of land use in the City's economic development strategy. This discussion will continue at their next meeting on Tuesday, October 11, 2011.

# VI. Neighborhood Planning Committee

Commissioner Wencl announced that they had met and talked about the nonconforming use amendments. This discussion will continue at the next Neighborhood Planning Committee meeting on Wednesday, October 5, 2011.

## VII. Transportation Committee

Red Rock Lower Afton Station Area Plan - Approve resolution recommending adoption by the Mayor and City Council. (Christina Morrison, 651-266-6546)

Commissioner Spaulding said the station area plan addresses the area around Lower Afton Road and Highway 61 and would become effective when Red Rock Corridor is built and that station is built as part of that corridor. The plan anticipates a parking ramp and a skyway type connection over Highway 61 to the station platform on the west side of Highway 61.

Commissioner Ochs asked if 2030 was an accurate estimate for when Red Rock Station might be implemented.

Commissioner Spaulding said the Lower Afton station may be built after the Red Rock Corridor itself, because ridership may not justify the expense in the initial construction phase of the project.

Allen Lovejoy, Department of Public Works, explained that the construction of rail in this corridor is speculative. The initial ridership estimates are low, and not now supportive of likely capital costs. (Current projections of ridership are approximately half of what Northstar is carrying today.) Red Rock Commuter Rail – given the level of construction costs and modest ridership - will likely be built as part of inter-city rail investment between the Twin Cities and Chicago. It could be 2030 or 2015 or 2040 - it is very difficult to tell. Another thing is that the park and ride demand in this station area is growing. Current high demand for park and ride in Woodbury, and growing congestion on I-94 suggest that park and ride demand will continue to grow in the long-term. The prospect of having a commuter rail station there in the long run is good.

Commissioner Ochs agrees with the Transportation Committee that it is wise to plan for Red Rock now, even though there may be some specific issues to be resolved at a later date.

Commissioner Wencl asked if the existing park and ride on the south side of Lower Afton will continue and is there a plan to build a park and ride on the north side or will that be held off until this would be built?

Mr. Lovejoy said that he does not know what the long-term future may be. The current park and ride is likely to stay for at least the short-term future. The community council and neighborhood people really wanted to move it to the northeast quadrant of the intersection, but there are some challenges that make that move quite expensive. Metro Transit wanted to expand the park and ride in its current location, but the community is objecting. For the time being, Metro Transit is taking expansion off the table for now, but will continue to look at park and ride options that aren't quite as invasive to the neighbors along Point Douglas Road. If and when the commuter rail station is built on the northeast quadrant it will supplant the bus park and ride. Commuter rail service will not totally replace all of the bus service. The commuter rail park and ride structure will be sized in a way that can deal with both the commuter rail demand and the bus park and ride demand.

Commissioner Reveal asked Mr. Lovejoy to explain the relationship between this and the Chicago, Minneapolis passenger rail corridor.

Mr. Lovejoy believes that in the short- to mid-term, inter city rail will be coming up the Highway 61 corridor, but it will not be "high speed rail". As an initial step, Illinois, Wisconsin and Minnesota are in negotiations with Amtrak to try and improve their service to at least two trains in each direction on a daily basis. The additional trains would go no further west of the Twin Cities. It is one of the busiest most heavily demanded services outside the east coast in the country for Amtrak. It's conceivable that in the long-term as many as six Amtrak trains a day might be appropriate.

<u>MOTION</u>: Commissioner Spaulding moved the Transportation Committee's recommendation to approve the resolution recommending that the Red Rock Lower Afton Station Area Plan be adopted by the Mayor and City Council. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.

Commissioner Spaulding announced the items on the agenda for the next Transportation Committee meeting on Monday, October 3, 2011.

VIII. Form-Based Coding for the Ford Site – Presentation by J. Michael Orange, MPCA Retiree Environmental Technical Program (RETAP), and Peter Musty, Peter Musty, LLC.

Merritt Clapp-Smith, PED staff, announced that at the last Planning Commission meeting Bob Kost gave a presentation, an introduction to Form-Based Codes and today is a follow up looking specifically at evaluation of different zoning options for the Ford site, as a mechanism for implementing the various goals there including sustainability. Ms. Clapp-Smith introduced the two gentlemen presenting, first was Michael Orange. He came to the City through a program of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). They have retiree experts on retainer which they match up with different projects on sustainability around the region. MPCA suggested Mr. Orange look at mechanisms through zoning for implementing sustainability. The second speaker is Peter Musty, who was one of the lead consultants that worked on the Roadmap to Sustainability Report for the Ford Site, which Ms. Clapp-Smith had presented to the Planning Commission a couple of months ago. Mr. Musty works more with urban design and municipalities in implementation, so he has some experience with Form-Based codes and he put thought into zoning approach options for the Ford site.

Michael Orange began by saying he was pleased to have a chance to address the Planning Commission on the report he wrote. His charge was to figure out the best way for the City to rezone the Ford Plant site and the two approaches that were considered was either adapting the existing code to make it work or to drop in something new, a Form-Based Code. At first he thought that it would be an either/or when he began his research. His recommendation is towards more of a hybrid approach that utilizes the existing code and takes the best from form-based codes to supplement it. The main charge was to bring the recommendations of the Roadmap to Sustainability alive in the zoning code. Mr. Orange pointed out that there is a recommendation in the Roadmap to consider adoption of a form-based code. He also researched the Smart Code, which is the most developed and most common version of a Form-Based Code. His key recommendation for implementing any zoning approach on the Ford Plant site is to begin with a 40-acre rezoning study. A key part of that study would be to do a small area plan, which could embed the Roadmap to Sustainability recommendations in the plan. He boiled down the recommendations into 26 key elements, half of which can go into a regulating package of the zoning code, while the other half have general site applicability but are not project specific and therefore cannot be addressed in the zoning code. A project can not be approved or denied on those latter elements, but they do belong in a plan which then guides public and private projects. The 14 recommendations that can go into the current zoning code would be best applied as performance standards in a Ford site overlay district. The tools to do this are already in the zoning code -- performance standards and overlay districts -- it's not a leap to create a new district to regulate the site.

Mr. Orange showed a table that accompanies his report which lists the 26 recommendations from the Roadmap, and whether or not they could be addressed under a modification of the current zoning code and under a form-based code. His key finding is that either approach will work,

either a form-based code or amending the current code. The question is: What is most efficient?

The form-based code literature states that they are clearer, because they are graphically oriented, simpler, and easier to manage because more of the review is handled administratively rather than going through a Planning Commission or City Council. That advantage has to be balanced against the fact that if the City adopts a form-based code then it has two kinds of zoning tools to administer, with all of the players having to learn both systems -- the Commission, City Council, the developers and the citizens. In conclusion he said that there are many tools under the City's current code that make implementation of the Roadmap possible, using performance standards, overlay districts and a small area plan.

Peter Musty, Urban Designer, thanked the commission for giving him a chance to go over more ideas about the Ford Plant site. He talked about the Roadmap report and summary document showing all of the recommended site wide and site specific standards for sustainability on the site. With a clear agenda laid out by the report, the next step is evaluation of implementation options. One implementation option is to use an integrated design process. The second is using a form-based development code, and the third is using green building standards. LEED for Neighborhood Development might be another tool, or the use of incentives for standards that are most important to Saint Paul. Musty emphasized the importance of starting with a public realm master plan, which could address many of the guidelines for the site.

Musty noted that there is a great storm water management report for the Ford site, which provides a good framework for site redevelopment. He suggested that the City work with the land holder, the land developer and Ford to design and engrave a first class public realm plan, which could be adopted within a small area plan or a form-based code. He doesn't think that any developer has as much at stake in the long term success of the site in regard to sustainability the City does. The City has the most at stake to make sure that this plan is as wonderful as possible.

Musty noted that the City is moving toward the development of a tricky Brownfield site in a period of slower economic growth, and that growth is slower in this region during any period versus other major metro areas. With a slower growth rate, the rate of absorption for the Ford site may lead to a higher number of smaller phases, making a strong public realm plan even more important.

Mr. Musty said that TN zoning is a type of form-based code, focused on intensity of development. There are other types of form-based codes. The question is: whether the Saint Paul tools can be used to zone the Ford site or whether there could be an overlay that plops in a Smart Code template or something similar. Mr. Musty compared the development shown in the five Ford site scenarios to the TN zones and found that TN2, TN3 and TN4 all relate to types of development in the scenarios.

Commissioner Spaulding asked about how a Smart Code or other form-based code addresses industrial uses on that site.

Mr. Musty said that in the Smart code industrial uses are dealt with as a special district. Smart codes are good at regulating for traditional neighborhoods. If the entire Ford site were to be used as industrial a Smart code would not be looked at, but if it was part of a traditional neighborhood development, a lighter industrial or smaller work place environment it may make sense to be integrated within a larger form-based code that's built or a template for a traditional development.

Commissioner Fernandez asked if most of this is contingent upon what is underneath the soil and contamination. Also when is that supposed to get underway?

Ms. Clapp-Smith said the environmental assessment will kick into high gear again when the plant closes. In 2012 this will begin and they're imagining 18-24 months to get a good handle on what's there. They're waiting to see what they find out on this site and what the cost would be to clean it up and if there will be parts of the site that they can't clean up.

Commissioner Ward said looking at some of the larger development opportunities that have presented themselves here in this region over the past 10-years, how are we doing with being able to get maximum use for a particular site, looking at current zoning and how it applies to best methods of being able to recapture or reclaim use of that land and integrating it in existing neighborhoods.

Mr. Musty said that they have come out of a tradition of great regulation in the Twin Cities. In terms of moving into a posture where we are doing development at larger scales efficiently we are not there. We are definitely in silos in terms of regulating sustainability and urbanism together, but they are moving forward.

Commissioner Wickiser asked if a form-based code within a development district has a minimum or maximum growth square footage. And he commented using the Victoria Park example. He said that it seems to him that the TN zoning was meant to mesh with the neighborhood and what we're getting at Victoria Park is large buildings that aren't going to mesh with the neighborhood. Victoria Park might not be a good example because there is such a long history with regards to that site and lawsuits and environmental issues, but it seems to him that, that could also be true at the Ford site. So let's have a traditional neighborhood and let's continue that fabric instead of TN allowing massing on the site and whether or not it can be put into the development guidelines.

Mr. Musty said that he would start with a desired plan. Forget about zoning. Get a plan that is liked, go through the community and make sure that it's decided on not just a plan, but "the" plan. Get through a public realm plan and then a set of intensities, heights, and massing that's well articulated and it is with the municipality and the developer working together on it with the community in an integrated way, then apply the zoning to meet the plan.

Mr. Orange added that is state law, that zoning implements the approved plan.

Commissioner Ochs made the comment that he thinks as a commission and city that they need to make sure to focus on alternatives to housing and not ignore industrial or economic needs. He hopes there is an examination of alternatives to housing and to start thinking about preserving the Ford Plant as an industrial site.

Mr. Musty said they talked about industrial on the site. The Road Map does identify industrial, and they talked with MPCA throughout the preparation of the report. Industrial uses on the site or job centers and reusing the plant in different ways were talked about. If that should come out as a component they do call for a module in the Road Map that deals with industrial standards. Locally they have some resources to turn to. The current Road Map is set up for a neighborhood development, but they do not dive deeply into the opportunities for industrial. There should be some augmenting of the Road Map, especially if industrial is brought in as a chief use.

Commissioner Reveal said that this is exactly what brought them to the conversation they had at the Comprehensive Planning Committee where the staff is undertaking a new examination of all of the industrial zones. And immediately the Committee asked about the City's strategy with respect to industry. What could be job generating and industry is broadly defined. It is important to ask these questions relative to the Ford site, but the broader question of all the industrial area that remains. We are losing it, do we want to lose it and what is the highest and best use there. This is one of the seminal questions to deal with in the next year, because it makes such a difference along the corridor and such a difference in a place like Ford.

Commissioner Merrigan said in regards to the performance standards, she likes the idea of some comprehensive performance standards for the whole site. She is curious about how to maintain the standards throughout the process, from the beginning as opposed to just getting someone in to get things started as they develop in phases. Next in terms of the context, she is concerned about the access to the site.

Mr. Orange explained that the performance standards would be applicable to specific projects and they would be within the zoning code. The plan would be the tool the City would use to bring in the recommendations from the Road Map that applies to the entire Ford Plant site. He can not address the access issue.

Mr. Musty wanted to make clear that he had a very narrow assignment. It was to look at the dozen or so resources that are listed in his report and make recommendations about whether the Road Map recommendations could be best accomplished via the existing code and with a form-based code.

Ms. Clapp-Smith explained that access is an important issue for the site. When they had the developers forum at the beginning of the creation of the scenarios, they all identified the transportation limitations as shaping the potential of the site. It can't have a large destination use or uses that require a lot of trucking access or high volume of traffic. When the City does the AUAR evaluation of the scenarios, it will include a traffic impact study, which will help the City better understand where the limits of use might be as far as residential properties, office and industrial. That will provide important information to help the community and the City in understanding what the framework should be. In wrapping up, Clapp-Smith noted a couple of things that came up. First, she reminded everyone about the green manufacturing report that was done a few years ago for the site. Job creation is a priority of the Mayor and they have to think about what makes sense there and what fits in given limitations of the site in a built up neighborhood. It will be an important and challenging conversation as they move forward to determine what kind of jobs could fit in there and work well.

Also, she explained that the integrated design process mentioned by Musty is a process whereby all the different disciplines of planning for the site work very closely together at the beginning -- roads, sewer, public infrastructure, etc. -- to figure out where they can save costs in these systems by working together and using green design in a manner that's less expensive. It can be more affordable if it is planned at the beginning in a smart way. It's figuring out what elements from the Road Map are really important to the City and to the community, and can be cost effective if done well at the beginning. City staff are still early in the research phases of looking at the different zoning tools that might be used at the site and thinking about a rezoning framework. Staff will begin the same conversation with the Ford Task Force and the community over this coming year, while continuing to do research and bring information to the Planning Commission.

## IX. Communications Committee

None

## X. Task Force Reports

Commissioner Oliver announced that the Near East Side Task Force is having an open house about the East 7<sup>th</sup> commercial building recommendations at the Bethlehem Lutheran Church at 655 Forest Street on October 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m.

Commissioner Reveal asked which task forces are working right now and how many are there?

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, said that there is the Near East Side Task Force, West Midway and a group working in District 6, among several others.

Commissioner Reveal asked whether all those have been created in anticipation of some kind of area plan, small area plan or what?

Commissioner Oliver said that the Near East Side Task Force is trying to pull together all the different plans that have been done in the area. This is more of a branding strategy and coordination strategy.

Reveal asked if these task forces are Planning Commissioners only or are they Planning Commissioners plus others.

Commissioner Wencl said that they are Planning Commissioners and community members. She also asked what happened to the Ford Task Force.

Ms. Drummond said that the anticipation is that the Ford Task Force will be meeting this fall once Ford announces the actual date of the plant closing. Then there will be more information about what that means in terms of plant decommissioning and next steps.

# XI. Old Business

None.

## XII. New Business

None.

# XIII. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary Planning and Economic Development Department, City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Donna Drummond

Planning Director

Approved

(Date)

Anthony Fernandez

Secretary of the Planning Commission

PED\butler\planning commission\minutes\September 30, 2011